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Piracy, Blagojevich

. Lead Stories Summary

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11. Lead Stories Summary

Editorials focused on the controversy between the CSU and CDU on lowering taxes, on German participation in the EU mission to combat piracy, and on the government's most recent personal data protection measures. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute opened with a story on German anti-piracy efforts, and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on a bill to improve data protection.

12. (UK-Iraq) Withdrawal Of British Forces From Iraq

Sueddeutsche Zeitung judged: "The British withdrawal from Iraq cannot surprise anyone because London's forces hardly played an independent role over the past two years. But the UK soldiers will not leave the country either as winners or losers. They will leave as a force that has lost its significance. Despite all slogans of the coalition, the Iraq war was and has been primarily an American war. Right from the start, Tony Blair played the role of Washington's loyal supporter. His successor Gordon Brown is trying to play a different role: he wants to remain loyal to the alliance but has in mind to limit the damage for Britain, something for which the British should highly esteem him. They can now watch the final act of this adventure in Iraq, the U.S. troop withdrawal, from a distance."

In the view of Berliner Zeitung, "A new agreement on the legal status of the British military presence in Iraq is necessary at the end of the year, because the UN mandate expires. Basically the problem is to shape the withdrawal as dignified as possible. The judgment over the most devastating, most tragic, and most stupid invasion of allied western forces in the most recent time has been made anyway. But the soldiers cannot be blamed...for a failure of this war. Military and political strategists in London and Washington are responsible for this failure. Over the past five

years they have forfeited any claim to be the moralizers of the 21st century."

13. (Economic) German Reaction To Financial Crisis

Weekly Die Zeit noted: "Within a few weeks, the economic crisis has turned Angela Merkel from a modern globalization-oriented politician of the 21st century into the reincarnation of an industrial politician of the fallen, old Federal Republic of Germany. Instead of wondering where are the jobs of the future, instead of developing a green deal for the future that could be a model for the world, instead of looking ahead, she has again focused on a very old conflict: jobs against the protection of the environment; cars against the climate. Like in the 1980s of the past century, environmental protection is declared a luxury, which we can afford in good but not in bad times."

Frankfurter Allgemeine reported under the headline: "Almost In The Pillory," that "it seems that Germany has replaced the favorite enemy image among the Americans. It is no longer France that acts as a spoilsport but Germany-bashing has been en vogue this season. In the United States, people are criticizing the restrained German policy in the fight against the financial and economic crisis - as if hectic activities ` la Sarkozy possessed a confidence-building value in themselves. And there are additional reasons in America why the enthusiasm about the woman in the Chancellery has declined: the criticism of the German policy towards Iran, the alleged refusal of the Berlin government to support stricter sanction son Iran, criticism of the rules that restrict the Bundeswehr mission in Afghanistan, and the German policy towards Russia. All this hides the fears that influential government members, especially the ones in the Foreign Ministry, would take seriously their rhetoric about 'Germany as a bridge' and really orient the country to a middle position."

14. (EU) Summit

Sueddeutsche Zeitung argued: "When the EU leaders during these gloomy economic times quarrel about the global protection of the climate and are at odds with each other about the right path out of the economic trough and try to achieve a reform of the European Union, then even more is involved. Everywhere countries are looking for ways out of the crisis. That is why other countries and continents will closely watch this EU summit. They want to know whether the European claim to play a trailblazing role in climate protection is more than posturing, and whether the Europeans have the courage to free themselves from idiosyncratic national paths and face global challenges together. Europe can now prove that it is able to lead the world and is able and willing to take over responsibility beyond its own borders."

Frankfurter Allgemeine criticizes the French reaction to the economic crisis and concluded: "Sarkozy began in good way as a crisis manager this summer, because he was quick to save the banks and organized a European answer. In view of the market failure on the financial markets, his intervention was appropriate and justified. But now he is threatening to lose his reputation with an erratic economic policy which wants everything at the same time. The comprehensive state intervention could create a status quo which could no longer be reversed after the end of the crisis. This intervention will not be able to stop the decline of the economy. It would be a contribution to the credibility of politicians to explain to the people that the state is not omnipotent."

Die Welt noted: "As the case of Greece has demonstrated, the European Union needs new forms of associations such as the ones that have been discussed in connection with Turkey. And it should be possible to put in quarantine such states to lead them to European standards by closely watching its activities. Otherwise Europe will not europeanize the Balkans, but the Balkans will balkanize the EU."

According to regional daily Th|ringer Allgemeine, "the ecological turnabout is threatened to be ground between national interests in the shadow of the recession. The problem is that climate protection is not suited to be applied during good times only. If the climate only increases by two degrees Centigrade, the global climate will fall apart in an irreversible way. At the upcoming EU summit, the leaders will have to try to achieve the dichotomy of sticking to an

ambitious climate protection package and also save their industries from strict regulations. We doubt whether this will be successful."

15. (Greece) General Strike

According to Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, "new ideas in Greece have come from the extreme left wing or from the other side of society, the Greek-orthodox Church. But in the ranks of the New Democracy party, there has hardly been anyone who could have been able to represent in a credible and courageous way conservative values to the outside. Prime Minister Karamanlis has not turned out to be the great reformer but instead capitulated in view of the inertia of his society. If he had shown this courage, he would have been voted out of office after his first term, because there is no majority for a true reform policy in Greece."

Die Welt editorialized: "A faltering, partly collapsing state order, government supported organized crime, disorganization and a lack of social cohesion are the background for the fires that are ravaging the country. These are not natural disasters which are inflicted on the Greeks; these are instantaneous self-ignitions of a state which can best be described with the term 'weak state.'"

Mdrkische Oderzeitung of Frankfurt on the Oder opined: "The financial crisis social problems and the lack of perspectives for a highly qualified youth are now cited as reasons to explain the degree of the revolt. But this is only partly true, and the ouster of the conservative Karamanlis government would not change this situation. Like this one, the socialists were involved in corruption, financed their nepotism with EU funds, while the public service just failed and urgent reforms were put off repeatedly. The ones who are suffering are the people. The cradle of democracy has lost its idols. The EU member Greece is simply ruining itself."

16. (Piracy) EU Atalanta Mission

"It is good that Germany is taking part in the EU anti-piracy mission 'Atalanta,' Sueddeutsche Zeitung editorializes, and adds: "Resolute action against the pirates is overdue and Germany cannot stay by the sidelines. But with the military operation of the EU and NATO will not change the disastrous situation in disintegrating Somalia. Something must be done against this, but on a short-term basis, a success cannot be achieved at this front. That is why the symptoms of this crisis must be fought. Piracy is a crime and in the Somali form of this is organized crime, and this is a case for police that does not exist along the Horn of Africa."

Tagesspiegel observed: "It is time for an honest debate, for a military assessment of the situation and then a decision in the Bundestag. They must say with which means Germany, and its future governments, wants to safeguard its own interests, and then amend the Basic Law accordingly. It will soon become clear that the military means will not be sufficient to safeguard these interests."

Frankfurter Rundschau argued: "The German government made an acceptable decision in the fight against piracy. In a worst case scenario, this can lead to conflicts with the pirates. That is why it approved a robust mandate. There may be people who regret this additional mission of German soldiers, but it cannot be avoided, because the interests of a trading nation and the international pressure are too great."

17. (U.S.) Blagojevich

Frankfurter Allgemeine had this to say: "It is well known that ambassadorial posts in America are given to (political) friends and donors of the president, but the fact that vacant seats are to be auctioned is new. The place where this was to happen is no surprise, because Illinois leads the pack of the most corrupt states. The opposition will certainly try to blow up this affair and turn it into a scandal. But there is another delicate detail: in New York, Senator Kennedy is lobbying without any scruples for John F. Kennedy's daughter to win the seat which Hillary Clinton will now give up."

According to Die Welt, the Blagojevich affair "is first of all

embarrassing for President-elect Obama. It begs the question whether it is thinkable that Barack Obama has matured into a politician in Chicago without having relied at least a bit on the 'machine?' But unlike a few of his close aides, Obama has pursued his career for a long time away from the Daley machine and only formed a purposive alliance with Daley Jr. a year ago. All indications are that Obama turned into the reformer out of disgust about dirty politics in Chicago, by advocating stricter ethic rules in politics and administration first in Chicago and now in Washington. It is he who is now asking the candidates for top positions to reveal conflicts of interests in a tougher way than any other president did. Obama must now see to it that Chicago swamp will not rub off on him."